AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the Application.

All claims currently being amended are shown with deleted text struckthrough or double-bracketed and new text underlined. Additionally, the status of each claim is indicated in a parenthetical expression following the claim number.

Claims 1 and 24 are currently amended.

No claims have been cancelled.

Claims 46-57 have been withdrawn from consideration.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1   Claim 1 (currently amended): A method for accelerating [[the]] sales transactions of
2   customers in a retail store, comprising the acts of:

3   reading a customer payment card number at a customer checkout accelerator;

4   determining a preapproval amount for the sales transaction;

5   displaying the preapproval sales transaction amount to the customer on the customer
6   checkout accelerator for acceptance;

7   transmitting the preapproval amount to an external card services system for approval;
8   and

9   storing the approval amount in a preapproval cache at a point of sales terminal for
10   use in completing the sales transaction.

1   Claim 2 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2   in a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the act of transmitting the preapproval amount
3   from the customer checkout accelerator to a store controller.

1   Claim 3 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 2 further comprising placing an entry in a preapproval database if

3   the external card services system approves the transaction amount.

1   Claim 4 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 3 further comprising notifying a point of sales terminal of the

3   approval amount.

1   Claim 5 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the act of determining if the payment card is

3   one or more of a credit card, a debit card, a customer loyalty card, an electronic/Internet

4   wallet, or an electronic gift certificate.

1   Claim 6 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 5 wherein if the payment card is a customer loyalty card,

3   determining a preapproval amount that is based on an actual purchase history for the

4   customer.

1   Claim 7 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 5 wherein if the payment card is a credit or debit card, determining

3   a preapproval amount that is based on an average customer purchase amount for credit and

4   debit transactions on a store wide basis.

1   Claim 8 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the act of manually entering a specific

3   preapproval amount by the customer.

1   Claim 9 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the acts of:

3   scanning the customer payment card at a point of sales terminal;

4   determining if there is an entry for the customer in the preapproval cache; and

5   resuming the sales transaction at the point of sale terminal.

1   Claim 10 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 9 wherein the act of resuming the sales transaction comprises the

3   acts of:

4   comparing the actual sales transaction amount with the preapproval amount;

5   updating a preapproval database with the actual sales transaction amount; and

6   releasing the difference between the preapproval amount and the actual sales

7   transaction amount in the preapproval database.

Claim 11 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

in a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the act of printing a sales transaction receipt

and a credit or debit voucher.

1   Claim 12 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 9 wherein if there is no entry for the customer in the preapproval

3   cache, retrieving the preapproval amount from a preapproval database on a store controller

4   file server.

1   Claim 13 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 10 wherein the act of resuming the sales transaction includes the

3   acts of:

4   scanning the items selected by the customer for purchase during the sales

5   transaction;

6   determining a subtotal purchase amount after each item is scanned;

7   determining if the subtotal amount exceeds the preapproval amount; and

8   dynamically requesting an additional amount for approval during the sales

9   transaction, if the subtotal amount exceeds the preapproval amount.

Claim 14 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 13 further comprising the acts of:

transmitting an additional preapproval amount from the external card services system;

updating the preapproval cache with the additional preapproval amount if approved; and

notifying the operator of the point of sale terminal if the additional preapproval amount is denied.

Claim 15 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the act of displaying on the customer checkout accelerator a selection of special promotional merchandise that can be added to the sales transaction, wherein some or all of the promotional merchandise can be made available through a hyperlink to one or more Internet web sites.

Claim 16 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 15 further comprising the acts of:

creating a record of any additional items added to the sales transaction;

appending the additional items record to a preapproval database entry for the sales transaction.

Claim 17 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 16 further comprising the act of reading the additional items record into a sales transaction record at a point of sale terminal.

Claim 18 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 17 further comprising the acts of updating a vendor-based tracking database to bill the vendor for displaying a vendor advertisement on the customer checkout accelerator when the approval from the external card services system is approved.

1   Claim 19 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 1 further comprising the acts of:

3   configuring a selection of additional categories of items to be displayed on the

4   customer checkout accelerator based on customer preferences wherein some or all of the

5   categories of items can be made available through a hyperlink to one or more Internet web

6   sites; and

7   storing the category selections in a customer loyalty database that is maintained by

8   the retail store.

1   Claim 20 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 19 further comprising the act of displaying on the customer

3   checkout accelerator a selection of special promotional merchandise in the customer selected

4   categories that can be added to the sales transaction wherein some or all of the promotional

5   merchandise can be made available through a hyperlink to one or more Internet web sites.

1   Claim 21 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 20 further comprising the acts of:

3   creating a record of any additional items added to the sales transaction;

4   appending the additional items record to a preapproval database entry for the sales

5   transaction.

1   Claim 22 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 21 further comprising the act of reading the additional items record

3   into a sales transaction record at a point of sale terminal.

1   Claim 23 (original): The method for accelerating the sales transactions of customers

2   in a retail store of claim 22 further comprising the acts of updating a vendor-based tracking

3   database to bill the vendor for displaying on the customer checkout accelerator a vendor

4   advertisement for merchandise that can be made available through a hyperlink to the

5   vendor's Internet web site when the approval from the external card services system is

6   approved.

1   Claim 24 (currently amended): A computer readable medium containing a computer

2   program product for accelerating [[the]] sales transactions of customers in a retail store,

3   comprising:

4   program instructions that read a customer payment card number at a customer

5   checkout accelerator;

6   program instructions that determine a preapproval amount for the sales transaction;

7   program instructions that display the preapproval sales transaction amount to the

8   customer on the customer checkout accelerator for acceptance;

9   program instructions that transmit the preapproval amount to an external card

10   services system for approval; and

11   program instructions that store the approval amount in a preapproval cache at a point

12   of sales terminal for use in completing the sales transaction.

1   Claim 25 (original): The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 24 further comprising program

3   instructions that transmit the preapproval amount from the customer checkout accelerator to

4   a store controller.

1   Claim 26 (original): The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 25 further comprising program

3   instructions that place an entry in a preapproval database if the external card services system

4   approves the transaction amount.

1   Claim 27 (original): The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 26 further comprising program

3   instructions that notify a point of sales terminal of the approval amount.

1   Claim 28 (original): The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 27 further comprising program
3 instructions that determine if the payment card is one or more of a credit card, a debit card, a
4 customer loyalty card, an electronic/Internet wallet or an electronic gift certificate.

1   Claim 29 (original): The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 28 further comprising program
3 instructions that determine a preapproval amount that is based on an actual purchase history
4 for the customer if the payment card is a customer loyalty card.

1   Claim 30 (original): The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 28, further comprising program
3 instructions that determine a preapproval amount that is based on an average customer
4 purchase amount for credit and debit transactions on a store wide basis if the payment card
5 is a credit or debit card.

1   Claim 31 (original): The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 24 further comprising:

3   program instructions that scan the customer payment card at a point of sales
4 terminal;

5   program instructions that determine if there is an entry for the customer in the
6 preapproval cache; and

7   program instructions that resume the sales transaction at the point of sale terminal.

1   Claim 32 (original): The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2 transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 31 wherein the program instructions that
3 resume the sales transaction comprise:

4   program instructions that compare the actual sales transaction amount with the
5 preapproval amount;

6   program instructions that update a preapproval database with the actual sales

7   transaction amount; and

8   program instructions that release the difference between the preapproval amount and

9   the actual sales transaction amount in the preapproval database.

1   Claim 33 (original):   The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 24 further comprising program

3   instructions that print a sales transaction receipt and a credit or debit voucher.

1   Claim 34 (original):   The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 31, further comprising program

3   instructions that retrieve the preapproval amount from a preapproval database on a store

4   controller file server if there is no entry for the customer in the preapproval cache.

1   Claim 35 (original):   The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 32 wherein the program instructions that

3   resume the sales transaction further include:

4   program instructions that scan the items selected by the customer for purchase during

5   the sales transaction;

6   program instructions that determine a subtotal purchase amount after each item is

7   scanned;

8   program instructions that determine if the subtotal amount exceeds the preapproval

9   amount; and

10   program instructions that dynamically request an additional amount for approval

11   during the sales transaction, if the subtotal amount exceeds the preapproval amount.

1   Claim 36 (original):   The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 35 further comprising:

3   program instructions that transmit an additional preapproval amount from the

4   external card services system;

5   program instructions that update the preapproval cache with the additional

6   preapproval amount if approved; and

7   program instructions that notify the operator of the point of sale terminal if the

8   additional preapproval amount is denied.

1   Claim 37 (original): The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 24 further comprising program

3   instructions that display on the customer checkout accelerator a selection of special

4   promotional merchandise that can be added to the sales transaction, wherein some or all of

5   the promotional merchandise can be made available through a hyperlink to one or more

6   Internet web sites.

1   Claim 38 (original): The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 37 further comprising:

3   program instructions that create a record of any additional items added to the sales

4   transaction;

5   program instructions that append the additional items record to a preapproval

6   database entry for the sales transaction.

1   Claim 39 (original): The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 38 further comprising program

3   instructions that read the additional items record into a sales transaction record at a point of

4   sale terminal.

1   Claim 40 (original): The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 39 further comprising program

3   instructions that update a vendor-based tracking database to bill the vendor for displaying a

4   vendor advertisement on the customer checkout accelerator for merchandise that can be

5   made available through a hyperlink to the vendor's Internet web site when the approval from

6   the external card services system is approved.

1   Claim 41 (original):   The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 24 further comprising:

3   program instructions that configure a selection of additional categories of items to be

4   displayed on the customer checkout accelerator based on customer preferences, wherein

5   some or all of the categories of items can be made available through a hyperlink to one or

6   more Internet web sites; and

7   program instructions that store the category selections in a customer loyalty database

8   that is maintained by the retail store.

1   Claim 42 (original):   The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 41 further comprising program

3   instructions that display on the customer checkout accelerator a selection of special

4   promotional merchandise in the customer selected categories that can be added to the sales

5   transaction, wherein some or all of the promotional merchandise can be made available

6   through a hyperlink to one or more Internet web sites.

1   Claim 43 (original):   The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 42 further comprising:

3   program instructions that create a record of any additional items added to the sales

4   transaction;

5   program instructions that append the additional items record to a preapproval

6   database entry for the sales transaction.

1   Claim 44 (original):   The computer program product for accelerating the sales

2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 43 further comprising program

3   instructions that read the additional items record into a sales transaction record at a point of

4   sale terminal.

1   Claim 45 (original):   The computer program product for accelerating the sales
2   transactions of customers in a retail store of claim 44 further comprising program
3   instructions that update a vendor-based tracking database to bill the vendor for displaying on
4   the customer checkout accelerator a vendor advertisement for merchandise that can be made
5   available through a hyperlink to the vendor's web site when the approval from the external
6   card services system is approved.

1   Claim 46 (withdrawn): A system for accelerating the sales transactions of customers
2   in a retail store, comprising:

3   a customer checkout accelerator that provides a customer user interface that is used
4   to initiate a request for a preapproval amount for a sales transaction;

5   a card reader attached to, or integrated into, the customer checkout accelerator that
6   reads a customer payment card number when the card is swiped through the card reader;

7   a customer checkout accelerator server module residing on a store controller server
8   that determines a preapproval amount for the sales transaction and transmits the preapproval
9   amount to an external card services system for approval; and

10   a preapproval cache located at a point of sales terminal that stores the approval
11   amount for use in completing the sales transaction.

1   Claim 47 (withdrawn):   The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2   customers in a retail store of claim 46 further comprising a preapproval database for storing
3   a record for each approved sales transaction amount.

1   Claim 48 (withdrawn):   The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2   customers in a retail store of claim 47 wherein the preapproval database is a keyed access
3   file.

1   Claim 49 (withdrawn):   The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2   customers in a retail store of claim 47 wherein the preapproval database is a relational
3   database.

1   Claim 50 (withdrawn): The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2   customers in a retail store of claim 46 further comprising a graphical user interface (GUI)
3   that receives customer input from a terminal sales application and displays the customer
4   input in a full screen display of the customer checkout accelerator.

1   Claim 51 (withdrawn): The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2   customers in a retail store of claim 46 wherein the customer checkout accelerator server
3   module contains processing logic that provides interfaces between a plurality of operational
4   customer checkout accelerators in the retail store and credit or debit card service providers
5   for payment authorization.

1   Claim 52 (withdrawn): The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2   customers in a retail store of claim 47 wherein the customer checkout accelerator server
3   module contains processing logic that provides interfaces between a plurality of terminal
4   sales applications, each operating on a point sales terminal, and the preapproval database.

1   Claim 53 (withdrawn): The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2   customers in a retail store of claim 47 wherein the customer checkout accelerator server
3   module contains processing logic that provides access to the preapproval database.

1   Claim 54 (withdrawn): The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2   customers in a retail store of claim 46 wherein the customer checkout accelerator server
3   module contains processing logic that sends payment approval amount information to a
4   terminal sales application at a point of sales terminal for caching in a preapproval cache.

1   Claim 55 (withdrawn): The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2   customers in a retail store of claim 46 wherein the customer checkout accelerator server
3   module contains processing logic that maintains and updates the preapproval cache and a
4   preapproval database.

1   Claim 56 (withdrawn): The system for accelerating the sales transactions of
2   customers in a retail store of claim 46 wherein the customer checkout accelerator server
3   module contains processing logic that updates and maintains a vendor tracking database to

4   bill a vendor for displaying on the customer checkout accelerator a vendor advertisement for

5   merchandise that can be made available through a hyperlink to the vendor's Internet web

6   site.

1   Claim 57 (withdrawn):   The system for accelerating the sales transactions of

2   customers in a retail store of claim 46 wherein the customer checkout accelerator server

3   module contains processing logic that displays either store-configured or customer-

4   configured hyperlinks to Internet web sites for the purchase of additional items in a checkout

5   lane.